




**Illinois Historic  
Preservation Agency**

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: The Honorable Richard M. Daley, Mayor of the City of Chicago  
Brian Goeken, Landmarks Division, Department of Planning and  
Development

FROM: Andrew Heckenkamp, National Register Coordinator 

DATE: January 28, 2010

SUBJECT: Union Park Hotel Draft National Register Nomination Form

In accordance with the City of Chicago's role as a Certified Local Government, I have enclosed the above mentioned draft National Register Nomination for your review and comment.

Staff opinion is positive for the Union Park Hotel. The building meets Criterion C in the area of architecture as a good local example of the Art Deco style. It is my intention to place this nomination on the March 5, 2010 agenda of the Illinois Historic Sites Advisory Council for their consideration.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to call me at 217/785-4324, or by e-mail at [andrew.heckenkamp@illinois.gov](mailto:andrew.heckenkamp@illinois.gov).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Union Park Hotel

other names/site number Viceroy Hotel

## 2. Location

street & number 1519-1521 W. Warren Boulevard  not for publication

city or town Chicago  vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60607-1818

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_ local

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
  determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register
  removed from the National Register  
 other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
 (Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
 (Check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
 (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/specialty store

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

VACANT

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Art Deco  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete  
\_\_\_\_\_  
walls: Brick  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Glazed Terra Cotta  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Asphalt  
\_\_\_\_\_  
other: Wrought Iron  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Union Park Hotel, a finely detailed and usually-colorful terra cotta-clad residential hotel building, was designed by Chicago architect Benjamin Albert Comm in a sophisticated French-influenced version of the Art Deco style. Conceived of as a modern building catering to a fast-paced, "Jazz Age" society, the Union Park Hotel was constructed from 1929 to 1930. The six-story hotel is a locally-significant residential hotel building due to its distinctive Art Deco style, unusually colorful and finely detailed glazed terra cotta facade and extensive use of Art Deco-style decorative motifs, as well as its prominent location on a primary thoroughfare opposite historic Union Park. Historically designed to accommodate people of fairly modest means, the Union Park Hotel does not have grandly embellished interior spaces. The ground floor includes a modest hotel lobby and a secondary space with entrances from the street. Upper floors have double-loaded corridors accessing guest rooms. The Union Park Hotel has excellent integrity. The building's main façade facing Warren Boulevard retains the vast majority of its original features. Changes to the building's exterior are relatively minor and include the replacement windows and doors and the addition of a projecting entrance canopy. The building retains the ability to express its historic community, architectural, and aesthetic value through its location, overall design, decorative details, historic materials, and workmanship.

**Narrative Description**

The Union Park Hotel at 1519-1521 West Warren Boulevard is located two miles west of downtown Chicago on the Near West Side, one of Chicago's oldest neighborhoods that has sustained cycles of growth, decline and renewal. The hotel was originally named for Union Park, a historic 13-acre Chicago Park District park, located immediately across Warren Boulevard. The building occupies a 33,714-square-foot mid-block site on a triangular city block bounded by Ashland Avenue to the west, Warren Boulevard to the north, and the diagonal Ogden Avenue to the southeast. Warren Boulevard is a moderately-traveled thoroughfare while Ogden and Ashland Avenues are major commercial streets. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion of the city's downtown and improvements in public transportation resulted in greater commercial development and increased population density of the Near West Side; the Union Park Hotel exemplifies this historic development.

*Overall Exterior*

By the time of the construction of the Union Park Hotel in 1929, its developer sought to maximize the site by constructing the building at the edge of its property line. The hotel is a free-standing building; surface-level parking lots occupy adjacent lots to the east and west and an alley is situated at the rear. The main façade (north elevation) of the building is built up to the sidewalk and extends approximately 80 feet along Warren Boulevard, and the east and west side elevations measure 115 feet deep and extend to a rear alley. The building's basic "H-shaped" plan is created by exterior light wells centered on the

building's east and west elevations. The six-story-tall structure consists of load-bearing masonry walls, steel-columns, and clay-tile partitions intended to reduce the risk of fire. The main (north) façade, facing Warren Boulevard and Union Park, is highly decorative while the relatively plain side (east and west) and alley (south) elevations are constructed on Chicago common brick.

#### *Main Facade*

Overall the Union Park Hotel's main façade is eight bays wide and is characterized by strong symmetry. Clad with highly-stylized terra-cotta decoration in a palette of creamy beige, brown, golden, and pastel hues, the main façade utilizes a basic three-part division with a prominent single-story base anchoring a uniformly expressed shaft that rises to a lively roofline. Beginning with its dark-toned band of brown terra cotta situated at the ground level, its sandy beige-colored first story, and its bright cream-colored piers that rise to the parapet, the building's terra cotta ornament is shaded into lighter and lighter tonalities as it rises toward the top. Despite the relatively small-scale of the building, its vivid design and light colors at the parapet yields a distinctive visual presence that can be from several blocks away, across Union Park situated immediately north.

The building's base is clad in multiple horizontal bands of dark brown glazed terra cotta that is slightly darker than the rest of the building, giving it a weightier appearance. Atop the dark brown band of terra cotta at the ground level, six smooth bands alternate with five narrow, slightly-recessed fluted bands of beige-colored glazed terra cotta. Five large street-level storefront windows and a secondary entry are framed with decorative-metal frames with ornamental cresting. The central entrance door is located within a segmented-arch opening comprised of three bands of sandy-beige colored glazed terra cotta that recalls the corbelled-arches of Mayan architecture, a motif often borrowed by the Art Deco style of architecture. Within the arched entrance surround a brown terra cotta panel is set atop a band of Art Deco-style low-relief, geometric ornamentation that combines angular forms with sections of softly curving shapes. The east and west walls of the recessed entry opening are ornamented by a simplified pointed-arch frame of low-relief ornament of polychromatic glazed terra cotta in pastel hues. A glass and metal commercial replacement door is flanked by narrow sidelights.

A decorative terra-cotta stringcourse marks the division between the first floor and the upper stories and features a chevron pattern with superimposed geometric motifs in green, white, pink, and yellow hues. The stringcourse of low-relief of Art Deco style ornament comprised of light beige triangles pointing upward alternating with large and small tan triangles pointing downward features a scalloped bottom edge. V-shaped bands of polychromatic terra cotta featuring a wavy pattern are set within the tan triangles. A slightly projecting sill of beige terra cotta situated above the exuberantly detailed band of ornament demarcates the base of the building from the upper stories.

Above the street level, the design takes on a strong vertical emphasis dominated by eight continuous piers of gold-yellow face brick set off by white terra-cotta bands that extend the full height of the building. The east and west sides of the front elevation perfectly mirror one another, each with four brick piers rising through three bays of paired double-hung windows with one-over-one pane configurations. Each bay of windows is framed by a slender fluted white terra-cotta molding rising vertically from the building's one-story base to the sixth-floor, where window heads are topped with a polychromatic terra cotta relief featuring a stylized "sunburst," a favorite Art Deco-style motif and framed by a segmented terra-cotta arch that mimics the unusual ground-floor entrance door opening. At the central bay brick piers are replaced by three fluted piers in white terra cotta. The central pier is flanked by a tier of single window openings. Each of the three slightly tapered piers is capped by a stylized palm frond rising amidst a series of terra cotta blocks which feature abstracted stem designs. These whimsical decorative elements visually accentuate the verticality of the piers by attracting attention upward toward the building's roofline.

Spandrel panels are recessed and faces with beige face brick set in a "stack bond," where mortar joints between the bricks are aligned both vertically and horizontally. Ornamental terra-cotta medallions with geometric floral motifs in green, white, and yellow occupy the center of each spandrel. Punched window openings are framed with chevron-decorated lintels and projecting sills in golden-brown terra-cotta. The horizontal lines of the spandrels do not interrupt the rise of the piers and thus reinforce the verticality of the building.

The building's distinctive parapet is embellished with vertical bands of terra-cotta with wave-like *sine* curves that connote electricity and radiation. Within each bay four vertical bands rise to the bright white terra cotta coping that trims the parapet. Adding to the exuberant character of the roofline, above each segment-arched at the sixth story, the brickwork of the parapet wall is laid in a basket weave bond which reinforces the visual "movement" of the terra cotta ribbons. In the center of the roofline, the parapet rises to form a sharply angled prominent peak which is flanked by diminutive peaks. Moving out from the center of the roofline, the parapet receives a stepped treatment where white terra cotta trim uniformly "steps" downward toward the pointed-arch window below and then upward to the ornamented piers.

### *Secondary Facades*

The architect and builders of the Union Park Hotel clearly gave their greatest attention to the design of the main façade. In contrast to the hotel's elaborately detailed main façade, its secondary façades are relatively utilitarian. The hotel is H-shaped in plan with light wells centered on the building's side elevations (east and west). Metal sash, double-hung, one-over-one windows are situated in punched window openings within the light wells on stories one through six. All windows have concrete sills.

The hotel was designed with the notion that future buildings constructed on adjacent lots to the east and west would drastically limit or eliminate the visibility of the side elevations. Both side elevations of the Union Park Hotel feature a decorative polychromatic brick return that incorporates the golden-yellow and warm-brown face brick of the main façade and extends approximately fifteen back from the front elevation. Golden-yellow face brick laid in a common bond rises from ground level to a band of beige-toned terra cotta at the second floor. Alternating vertical bands of yellow and brown brick rise from the second story to the creamy white terra-cotta coping at the top of the building. The yellow brick bands are laid in a common bond, while the bands of brown brick incorporate more elaborate masonry patterns including a stack bond and basket-weave bond. Beyond the face brick return the building's side elevations are constructed of common brick. Portions of common brick side elevations have been parged with concrete.

The hotel's rear elevation is also constructed of common brick. Three door openings and four window openings are situated at the ground level of the rear elevation. Evidence of alterations to window and door openings at the ground level includes the brick infill of two window openings and changes to the sill height of two windows. On the second through sixth stories metal sash, double-hung, one-over-one windows are situated in seven rows of equally-spaced punched window openings. All have concrete sills. Four heavy metal fire doors accessing a metal fire escape are situated on the east side of the rear elevation.

### *Interior*

Historically designed to accommodate people of fairly modest means, the Union Park Hotel has modest, unembellished interiors, and finishes. The interior of the Union Park Hotel's ground floor includes a modest hotel lobby with an entrance from the street. A small vestibule leading from the entrance to the lobby features decorative plaster arches that rise to the ceiling. In the lobby plaster reliefs featuring abstracted geometric forms ornament the walls. Similar ornament is reflected in the large ceramic floor tiles in the main lobby that also feature Art Deco-style motifs. A small lounge which also incorporates such decorative features as plaster columns and decorative reliefs is situated within the main lobby. In addition to the lobby, the ground story also includes seven guest rooms and a larger manager's apartment.

Floors two through six each have thirty-two guest rooms. Access to the guest rooms is gained along an H-shaped double-loaded corridor. Guest rooms are very modest and compact. Typical guest rooms feature a living area (ranging in size from 104 square feet to 147 square feet) and a small bathroom (measuring approximately 25 square feet). Each bathroom includes a small tub, sink, and toilet. All rooms have an exterior window. Plaster covers the walls and ceilings of each guest room. Plaster ceilings in the upper floor hallways feature barrel vaults.

### *Integrity*

The Union Park Hotel has excellent integrity. The building's main façade facing Warren Boulevard retains the vast majority of its original features. As outlined in the summary paragraph, changes to the building's exterior are relatively minor and include the replacement metal sash windows and doors and the addition of a projecting entrance canopy. Renamed the Viceroy Hotel in 1963, it is believed that the projecting canopy over the building's main entrance and the three story high metal and neon hotel sign advertising the "Viceroy Hotel" which rose vertically from above the canopy to just below the spandrel panel on the building's fifth story, was installed at this time. The neon sign has since been removed however a portion of the metal sign cabinet covers the central terra cotta pier on the second through the fourth stories of the building's front elevation. Other visible alterations to the building include the replacement of the door at the main entrance and the replacement of all windows double-hung windows with metal sash, double-hung, one-over-one windows in the same configuration as the original windows. The building retains its original design integrity, its historic feeling, and its intelligibility. Currently vacant, the building is slated for rehabilitation and reuse as affordable housing.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

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**Period of Significance**

1929

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**Significant Dates**

1929

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

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**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

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**Architect/Builder**

Benjamin Albert Comm, architect

Arthur A. Klein & Co., general contractor

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**Period of Significance (justification)**

See Narrative Statement of Significance.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Designed by Benjamin Albert Comm and constructed in 1929-1930, Chicago's six-story Art Deco-style Union Park Hotel meets National Register criterion C for Architecture; it has local significance as a residential hotel building due to the building's distinctive Art Deco style, unusually colorful and finely detailed glazed terra cotta facade, and extensive use of Art Deco-style motifs. The Union Park Hotel's use of pastel-colored terra cotta is innovative and unusual in the context of Chicago architecture. Its highly crafted Art Deco motifs, including sun bursts, zigzags, stylized floral panels and fluted piers, make the Union Park Hotel a significant example of Art Deco-style terra-cotta design as used for a Chicago residential hotel building. Additionally, its well-crafted terra cotta facade exemplifies the importance of the terra cotta industry in the history of Chicago and Chicago's role in the production of this important building material. The Union Park Hotel retains its historic form, massing, design, and decorative ornament that convey its original hotel function.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance)

Chicago first developed as a pivotal point for maritime traffic as well as the crossroads of railroad routes. Its lake port location with ready access to canal, river and rail gave the merchants and manufacturers who established operations in the City a great advantage. In the 1870s Chicago gained regional power within the national economy, surpassing longer established rivals such as St. Louis and Cincinnati. By the 1890s, Chicago was America's second city, rivaled only by New York. As the national center of passenger and freight rail traffic, a major center of manufacturing, commodities sales and shipping, and retail commerce the City's downtown expanded rapidly and its population grew exponentially.

During the 1920s, the decade of the greatest residential hotel construction in Chicago, the city's population grew from nearly 675,000 to more than 3.3 million. The Union Park Hotel, constructed in the midst of the general boom of the early twentieth century, reflects the then-ongoing evolution of the City's Near West Side from largely residential neighborhood to a more densely populated area featuring a mix of commercial, industrial, residential, and loft buildings. Like the hotel districts that developed along West Madison Street, the Union Park Hotel, catered to workers of modest means—department store clerks, cashiers, messengers, salesmen, secretaries, and tradesmen—who had to be near the Loop and within walking distance of multiple jobs.

Rather than attempting to fit their buildings into older neighborhoods, architects of apartment hotels, like Benjamin Comm, the designer of the Union Park Hotel, used modern materials and architectural styles to proclaim the innovation that characterizes this uniquely urban residential building type. The economic depression of the 1930s ended the large scale construction of apartment hotels in Chicago. However, the Union Park Hotel continued to provide an important housing resource for Chicago into the 1980s.

*Building History of the Union Park Hotel*

Plans for the six-story Union Park Hotel were published in the *Chicago Tribune* on March 10, 1929. The newspaper announced that the building would be developed at 1519-1521 West Warren Boulevard, across the street from Union Park in "an attractive breathing spot not far west of the loop," by the Union Park Hotel Corporation at a cost of \$500,000. Principal investors in the hotel building were general contractors George Lapin and Arthur A. Klein. An accompanying article touting the hotel's design reported that, "In contrast to the majority of the structures in this locality, which are representative of the older styles of the city's architecture, the new hotel will be of modernistic design. And will add a dash of color to a district which has been well daubed with grime put on by Old Father Time for the front elevation is to be finished in terra cotta of varied hues." Building permits for the Union Park Hotel were issued on March 22, 1929. Upon its completion in October 1930, the Union Park Hotel operated in this location for a decade.

The Union Park Hotel was built across from the picturesquely-designed Union Park on Chicago's West Side. Catering to a more modest clientele than many lakefront residential hotel buildings, it made up for its relatively small scale through its visually-vibrant, Art Deco-style terra cotta facade. The building's design reflects the appeal of colored terra cotta in the late 1920s and early 1930s, as advances in terra cotta manufacture made possible a vast array of details and colors to create,



what was considered at the time, a “modernistic” building design. During this era, Chicago was a center of terra cotta manufacture, and the Union Park Hotel reflects the popularity of this building material and the significance of this industry to Chicago. Its exotic detail and distinctive polychromatic terra cotta make the Union Park Hotel an exceptional example of small-scale Chicago residential hotel architecture and the Art Deco style.

#### *Residential Hotel Buildings*

Residential hotels, also known as apartment hotels, developed in Chicago in the early twentieth century as a response to the continuing influx of residents, changing demographics, and financial abilities among middle- and upper-middle-class Chicagoans. Earlier in the City’s history, cheaper land values and low servant wages allowed a broad range of households, from the most wealthy to the middle class, to afford individual houses staffed with at least one servant. The growing expense of both in the years immediately prior to World War I, however, encouraged many Chicagoans, initially loath to consider apartment living due to its social non-respectability, to reconsider.

Chicago hotels had always served a variety of patrons, from short-term visitors to the City to long-term residents, but apartment hotels as a specific building type combined aspects of both hotels and apartments. Usually larger in scale than Chicago’s typical small 3-story apartment buildings, apartment hotels were often visually ornate with ornament based on historic architectural styles or, by the late 1920s, on innovative styles such as Art Deco. Apartments were small, ranging from studios in more modest buildings such as the Union Park Hotel to one- and two-bedroom suites in more prestigious lakefront buildings that could be expanded or contracted based on residents’ needs. Kitchenettes (often called “pantries”) were often provided for cooking, but room service was available, and residents typically had the use of a hotel dining room. Ballrooms and meeting rooms, typical of tourist and convention hotels, were absent. A variety of personal services, including maid service, were also available.

Residential hotels provided small apartments with a level of amenities that appealed to single professionals, office workers, and childless couples, for whom the expense of maintaining a house was beyond their means. Typically built in better, more-fashionable neighborhoods along Chicago’s lakefront, residential hotels satisfied a niche clientele in the City’s housing market during the prosperous years of the 1920s.

#### *Architectural terra-cotta in Chicago*

From the immediate post-Fire years of the 1870s through the early 1930s, Chicago was a leading American center for architectural terra-cotta design and manufacture. Terra cotta factories took advantage of Chicago’s vibrant and innovative architectural community, its strategic location at the center of the nation’s great railroad transportation network, and its proximity to clay deposits in nearby Indiana. In Italian, terra cotta means “baked earth.” For architectural purposes, however, terra cotta generally refers to building cladding or ornament manufactured from clay hand molded or cast into hollow blocks with internal stiffening webs and fired at temperatures higher than used for brick. Developed first to produce clay urns and garden statuary, the Chicago Terra Cotta Company—the first terra cotta company in the United States—opened in 1868 and soon expanded into architectural terra cotta production. Terra cotta soon became a staple of architects seeking fireproofing and decorative features in the years after the great Chicago Fire of 1871.

After the Fire, when it became apparent that cast-iron structural members in destroyed buildings had melted in the extreme heat, and brick and granite had broken and crumbled, terra cotta came into its own as a protective, fireproof building material. Terra cotta was used to encase cast iron structural supports such as I-beams and columns, as well as floor joists, partitions and as backing for exterior walls. Terra-cotta cornices were also in high demand because of their relative lightness (in comparison with stone) and perceived durability.

Use of terra cotta expanded when Chicago passed an ordinance in 1886 requiring that all buildings over ninety feet in height should be absolutely fireproof. In addition, the city’s building boom of the 1880s and 1890s gave terra cotta manufacture a tremendous boost as builders of skyscrapers found the building material an attractive medium because of its lightness, durability (crisp details did not erode over time and could easily be cleaned), and potential for decorative uses (terra cotta’s plastic quality allowed for highly original ornament)—all attributes which stemmed from the nature of the material.

According to Sharon Darling, author of *Chicago Ceramics & Glass*, the innovative use of terra cotta as a fireproofing material has been attributed to three different men. The first was George H. Johnson, who in 1870, obtained the first of four patents on fireproof hollow tile. The second was Johnson’s associate, John M. Van Osdel, one of the great architects in the rebuilding of Chicago after the fire of 1871. The third was Sanford E. Loring, of the architectural firm of Loring & Jenney and a

former student of Van Osdel's. Loring was the founder of the Chicago Terra Cotta Company (1868-1879), the country's pioneer terra cotta works. By 1868, Chicago Terra Cotta perfected the manufacture of architectural terra cotta. In particular, there was a high demand for terra cotta building cornices, which had important cost and weight advantages over the more customary galvanized iron and stone cornices.

In 1877, certain employees of the Chicago Terra Cotta Company, John R. True, Gustav Hottinger, John Brunkhorst, and two others left the firm to form their own company: True, Bunkhorst & Company. When Chicago Terra Cotta Company went out of business in 1879, its orders and its factory at West 15th and Laffin streets were taken over by this new firm, which became the Northwestern Terra Cotta Works (1877-1960). After 1883, Northwestern operated out of a huge plant at Clybom and Wrightwood avenues, and shipped its architectural terra cotta across the nation. By 1900, it had become the nation's largest terra cotta producer, employing 750 workmen in a plant covering twenty-four acres.

American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Company (1881-1966), Chicago's third major terra cotta works, was an outgrowth of Spring Valley Tile Works founded in 1881 in Spring Valley, McHenry County. Once it started manufacturing terra cotta, the founder William Day Gates changed the company name and the name of the town (to Terra Cotta). American Terra Cotta, along with Northwestern Terra Cotta, soon dominated the Midwestern market.

The final of the big four Chicago terra cotta manufacturers was the Midland Terra Cotta Company (1910-c. 1939), organized in 1910 by William G. Krieg, formerly a city architect, and Alfred Brunkhorst, son of one of the founders of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company. By 1900 all three of the nation's important terra cotta companies—Northwestern, American, and Midland—were headquartered in Chicago.

In the early years, however, few architects took advantage of the opportunities for colored glazes being pioneered by terra cotta firms. Even an 1898 article from *The Brickbuilder*, entitled "Notes on Terra Cotta for Exterior Polychrome Decoration," stated: "it seems to have been a question of willingness on the part of architects rather than the public that has thus deterred the use of color." Terra cotta was viewed mainly as a cheaper alternative to stone, which it often imitated in color.

It was not until the late 1920s that buildings clad with multi-colored terra cotta began to become popular. This coincided with a change in architectural taste and style generated by the 1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes. Many of the fair's buildings and exhibits were designed in a non-historic manner that soon took its name from the fair—Art Deco. Conceived as a modern architectural style, the Art Deco style as it developed during the late 1920s and early 1930s can generally be characterized by hard-edged building forms, exotic human and animal figures, and abstracted geometric and foliate ornament. Many Art Deco-style buildings also use color in strikingly non-traditional ways.

In 1927 the officers of the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company brought six French sculptors to Chicago to supply new designs for their firm. These artists introduced up-to-date Art Deco-style building ornament to the repertoire of historic architectural styles already produced by the firm, and Northwestern became known for its "Modern French" terra cotta ornament. The modelers, using motifs inspired by the large 1925 fair catalogue they had brought with them from Paris, quickly convinced local architects and other terra-cotta companies of the merits of the new Art Deco style. Soon colorful stylized flowers, dancing zig-zags, plump birds and exotic maidens began to make their debut in Chicago architecture. Unlike the prevailing historically inspired styles, these motifs represented an architectural style that looked to the future.

As interpreted in terra cotta by Northwestern sculptors, nature was reduced to its basic geometric forms. In the Art Deco style, flowers and leaves became flattened circles and triangles, while the lines and patterns within these became evenly spaced rays or chevrons. Other favorite Art Deco forms were volutes, arches, rays, bubbles, symmetrical ripples and fountains, and the stepped form known as the ziggurat. This kind of ornament was particularly suitable for multi-colored terra cotta, for the interplay of colors helped to emphasize the dramatic forms and lines of the design while making the low-relief ornament more distinct.

The Union Park Hotel's terra-cotta ornament is handsomely detailed with a wide array of pastel colors and Art Deco-style details such as palmettes, stems, and geometric designs. Although building research has not attributed the design of the building's terra-cotta to a particular company, its marvelous polychromy and decorative ornament appears to be influenced by the Northwestern Terra Cotta Company's French-trained designers.

Terra cotta-fronted buildings were especially popular during the 1920s and early 1930s as the styles, colors, and details possible with terra cotta multiplied. Most are ornamented with historical styles such as Classical Revival, Gothic Revival,

and Spanish Baroque Revival. Terra cotta storefront compositions based on the non-historic foliate ornament of Louis Sullivan also survive throughout the City. A smaller number of Art Deco-style small-scale commercial buildings have been documented.

Generally, terra cotta used for Classical Revival- or Sullivanesque-style buildings were usually designed to imitate stone with white or gray terra cotta. In contrast, Art Deco-style buildings like the Union Park Hotel have more exotic colors used for terra cotta. However, Chicago architects in general were relatively restrained in their exploitation of colored terra cotta, choosing to limit colors on any given building to two or three. Examples of these less common polychromatic Art Deco-style commercial buildings in Chicago documented by the Chicago Historic Resources Survey include a 1930-31 building clad in black and white terra cotta at 1600-8 W. Belmont Ave.; a one-story building at 4173-75 S. Archer Ave. also built in 1930 with yellow, light and dark green, and cream-colored terra cotta; and a small former bakery at 2941 N. Milwaukee Ave. with pale yellow and green terra cotta. In the context of small-scale hotel architecture in Chicago, the Union Park Hotel is a visually exuberant and unusual example of the Art Deco style, with its polychromatic glazed terra cotta and abstracted foliate and geometric ornament influenced by contemporary French design.

#### *Art Deco Style*

The Union Park Hotel is a locally significant building designed in the Art Deco architectural style. During its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s, the Art Deco was variously referred to as "Streamline" or "Moderne," with a French spelling and pronunciation. In fact, the term "Art Deco" did not come into popular use until the 1960s. As one of several strands of early 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernism in architecture, the Art Deco strived to create a new style of architecture of stripped down forms, new materials and rich decoration that reflected the prosperity and promise of the period between the World Wars.

The style takes its name the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* in Paris where jewelry, clothing, furniture, and the architecture that housed the exhibits displayed a colorful, future-looking aesthetic based on new materials and methods of manufacture. While the U. S. did not exhibit goods at the 1925 Paris Exposition, the show made a huge impression on the thousands of Americans who attended, including an official U. S. delegation of architects, artists, designers, trade association representatives and journalists.

The 1925 exhibit in Paris was the culmination but not the origin of the Art Deco style. As an eclectic style that borrowed freely from a range of sources, the origins of the Art Deco style elude precise definition. The style's emphasis on rectangularity and abstract geometric forms has been variously attributed to Charles Rennie Mackintosh's Arts and Crafts architecture, the Vienna Secession, the ornament of Frank Lloyd Wright and others of the Prairie School of Architecture. Similarly, the use of color in Art Deco can be traced to German and Dutch Expressionism in architecture, and the Art Deco's emphasis on verticality suggests the influence of the commercial buildings Chicago School. In addition to this amalgam of architectural innovations, the Art Deco style borrowed decorative motifs from ancient cultures such as the Egyptian and the pre-Columbian Mayan and Aztec cultures.

An important step in the establishment of the Art Deco in America occurred in Chicago in 1922 with Finnish architect Eliel Saarinen's entry in the competition for the new Chicago Tribune Building in 1922. Though Saarinen's radically stripped-down design with set backs did not win the competition, the design is recognized as an important early Art Deco influence, most notably on Hood and Howell's design for the American Radiator Building in New York from 1924. The stepped-back "wedding cake" shape of these designs that became a signature feature of the style was also influenced by the 1916 zoning ordinance in New York that regulated the massing of tall building to ensure light and air at street level.

Other large corporations in American cities, having grown rich in the booming economy of the 1920s, followed the New York example for their new skyscrapers and commercial buildings. In Chicago the architectural firm of Holabird and Root emerged as a leading practitioner of Art Deco commercial architecture. Important examples of the firm's Art Deco-style skyscrapers include the Palmolive Building (1927, a designated Chicago Landmark), Daily News Building (1928), the Civic Opera Building (1929, a designated Chicago Landmark), and the Chicago Board of Trade Building (1929-30, a designated Chicago Landmark). Other significant examples of the Art Deco skyscraper in Chicago include the Merchandise Mart (1928, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White), the Carbide and Carbon (1928, Burnham Brothers, a designated Chicago Landmark), and the Field Building (1931, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, a designated Chicago Landmark). Typical of the Art Deco style, most of these buildings include lavish lobbies with colorful marble finishes and bright metal fixtures.

Though Art Deco is perhaps best-known as a "skyscraper-style," it was applied to an entire range of building types in the 1920s and 1930s including small commercial store buildings, entertainment venues like theaters, institutional buildings, and

high-rise residential buildings like the Union Park Hotel. Without the height of skyscrapers, these smaller-scale Art Deco-style buildings largely depended upon starkly geometric and abstracted foliate ornament, often formed from multi-colored terra cotta, for visual effect.

The attributes of Art Deco architecture include a strong vertical orientation, often with setbacks as the building rises to a decorated roofline. Other formal characteristics include rectangular shapes, hard edges and textured wall surfaces. Ornamentation, which tends to be concentrated at the base and the top of the building, relies heavily on repeated geometric patterns such as zigzags, chevrons, octagons, and wave-like forms. These are often combined with geometrically abstracted animal and floral forms. The human figure also appears in ornament, often depicting characters from mythology or ancient cultures. All ornament tends to be executed in low relief. Color, either in vivid contrast or in gradual shading, was another important feature of Art Deco architecture. With its glazed surface, ornamental terra cotta offered architects a wide color pallet to choose from.

The Union Park Hotel's relatively flat façade and hard corners reflects the Art Deco's emphasis on pure geometric forms. The combination of the continuous vertical piers with the understated spandrel panels lends the building a strong vertical emphasis, another important trait of the style. The bold use of color was another characteristic of the Art Deco which is apparent in the Union Park Hotel's palette of creamy beige, brown, golden, and pastel hues in both terra cotta and brick. Geometric patterns in terra cotta such as the chevrons in the band above the first story, the "sunbursts" above the top story windows, and the wave-like curves in the parapet ornaments are all typical motifs of the style. The abstracted plant forms that are also common in Art Deco architecture are seen in the stylized wheat shafts at the parapet and the floral medallions in the spandrel panels. The Mayan-influenced entrance door-opening also manifests the Art Deco style's incorporation of Pre-Columbian and other archaeological architectural forms.

As an example of polychromatic Art Deco architecture, the Union Park Hotel is relatively unusual and rare within the context Chicago, for here architects and clients were relatively restrained in their exploitation of colored terra cotta. Besides the Union Park Hotel, other examples of polychromatic Art Deco architecture include the Laramie State Bank (1928, Meyer and Cook, a designated Chicago Landmark), the Veseman Building (1930, George F. Lovdall, a designated Chicago Landmark), and the Hyde Park Chevrolet Showroom and Garage (1929, Louis Kroman).

Similarly, the Union Park Hotel is an unusual example in Chicago of the Art Deco style applied to a tall residential building. Two other notable examples in Hyde Park are the Powhatan Apartments (1929, De Golyer and Morgan, a designated Chicago Landmark) and Narragansett Apartments (1928, Leichenko & Esser). A third example is the Belle Shore Apartments (1929, Koenigsberg & Weisfeld, a designated Chicago Landmark) clad in vivid shades of green terra cotta. Within the geographic context of Chicago's Near West Side, the Union Park Hotel is unusual as an Art Deco-style residential hotel with polychromatic terra-cotta ornament.

Just as the Art Deco aesthetic has become associated with the fast pace and prosperity of the American "Jazz Age" or "Roaring Twenties," the onset of the Great Depression in 1929 spelled the beginning of the style's demise. The strained economic conditions resulted in smaller, simpler, and more economical iterations of the Art Deco. At the time this late-development of Art Deco was known as Streamline Modern for its use of curved forms and horizontal lines, best exemplified in Chicago by the Frank F. Fisher Apartments (1936, Andrew Rebori, a designated Chicago Landmark). Also in Chicago, an important late manifestation of the style was the 1933 Century of Progress designed entirely in Streamline Modern by architects John A. Holabird and Raymond Hood. The Art Deco style survived through the 1930s primarily through government-sponsored public works; after World War II the Art Deco was superseded by the more radical International Style.

Due to its high-quality Art Deco design, distinctive use of polychromatic glazed terra-cotta and its fire-proof construction the Union Park Hotel is a significant example of an important property type, the Chicago residential hotel building. The building's fine quality and distinctive appearance reflect the historic context and time period when the apartment hotel flourished in Chicago, between 1918 and 1930. The Union Park Hotel has excellent integrity. The building's main façade facing Warren Boulevard retains the vast majority of its original features. Changes to the building's exterior are relatively minor and include the replacement windows and doors and the addition of a projecting entrance canopy. The building retains the ability to express its historic community, architectural, and aesthetic value through its location, overall design, decorative details, historic materials, and workmanship.

Union Park Hotel  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

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*Chicago Tribune*. Various articles.

Darling, Sharon. *Chicago Ceramics and Glass*. Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1979.

Gordon, Eleanor and Jean Nerenberg, "Chicago's Colorful Terra Cotta Façades." *Chicago History*, Winter 1979-80, vol. 8, no. 4.

Mack, Robert C. "The Manufacture and Use of Architectural Terra Cotta in the United States." *The Technology of Historic American Buildings Studies of the Materials, Craft Process and the Mechanization of Building Construction*. New York: Foundation for Preservation Technology, 1983.

Robinson, Cervin and Rosemarie Haag Bletter. *Skyscraper Style Art Deco New York*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1975.

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Whiffen, Marcus, and Frederick Koeper. 1981. *American architecture, 1607-1976*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: **Commission on Chicago Landmarks**

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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Union Park Hotel  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

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### 10. Geographical Data

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**Acreage of Property** 33,714-square-feet  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>16</u> Zone	<u>444732</u> Easting	<u>4636898</u> Northing	3	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing
2	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing	4	<u>          </u> Zone	<u>          </u> Easting	<u>          </u> Northing

#### Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

LOTS 6, 7, 8, AND THE WEST FIVE (5) FEET OF LOT 9 IN LAFLIN AND MATHER'S SUBDIVISION OF THE NORTH PART OF BLOCK "D": IN THE SOUTHWEST CORNER OF THE SOUTHWEST ¼ OF SECTION 8 TOWNSHIP 39 NORTH, RANGE 14, EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, SOMETIMES CALLED BLOCK "D" IN WRIGHT'S ADDITION TO CHICAGO AND BEING IN THE SOUTH PART OF LOT 4 IN THE CIRCUIT COURT PARTITION OF THE SOUTHWEST ¼ OF SECTION 8 AFORESAID, IN COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS.

#### Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The Union Park Hotel includes the entire parcel of land historically associated with it.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Heidi Sperry, Architectural Historian  
organization Commission on Chicago Landmarks date 1/15/10  
street & number 33 N. LaSalle St., Suite 1600 telephone (312) 742-7327  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60603  
e-mail hsperry@cityofchicago.org

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### Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Union Park Hotel  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:**

**City or Vicinity:**

**County:**

**State:**

**Photographer:**

**Date Photographed:**

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

1 of \_\_\_\_.

---

**Property Owner:**

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name City of Chicago

c/o Department of Community Development, Real Estate Division

street & number 121 N. LaSalle Street, Room 1000

telephone 312-744-9476

city or town Chicago

state Illinois

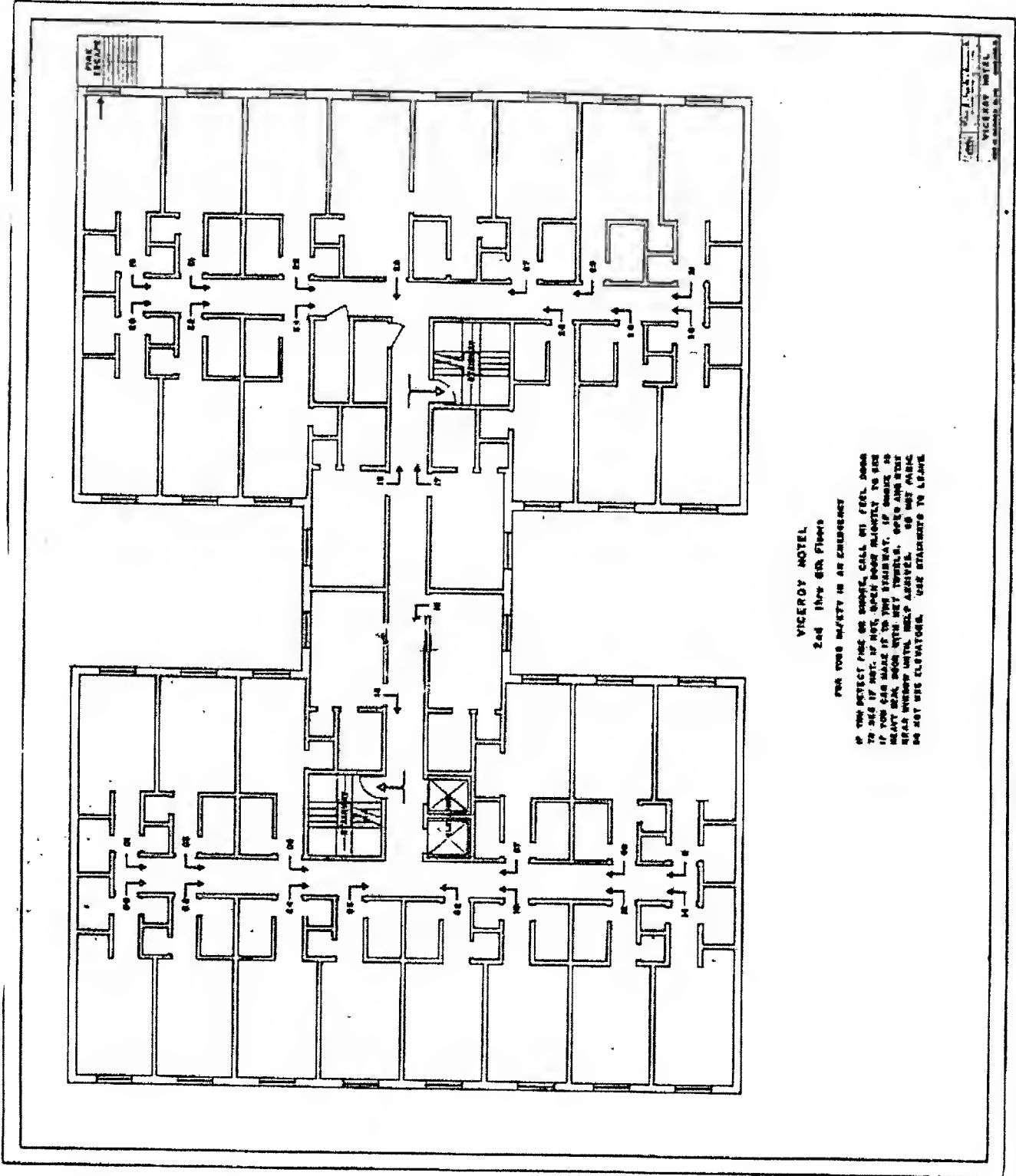
zip code 60602

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Union Park Hotel – Typical Floor Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> Floor)

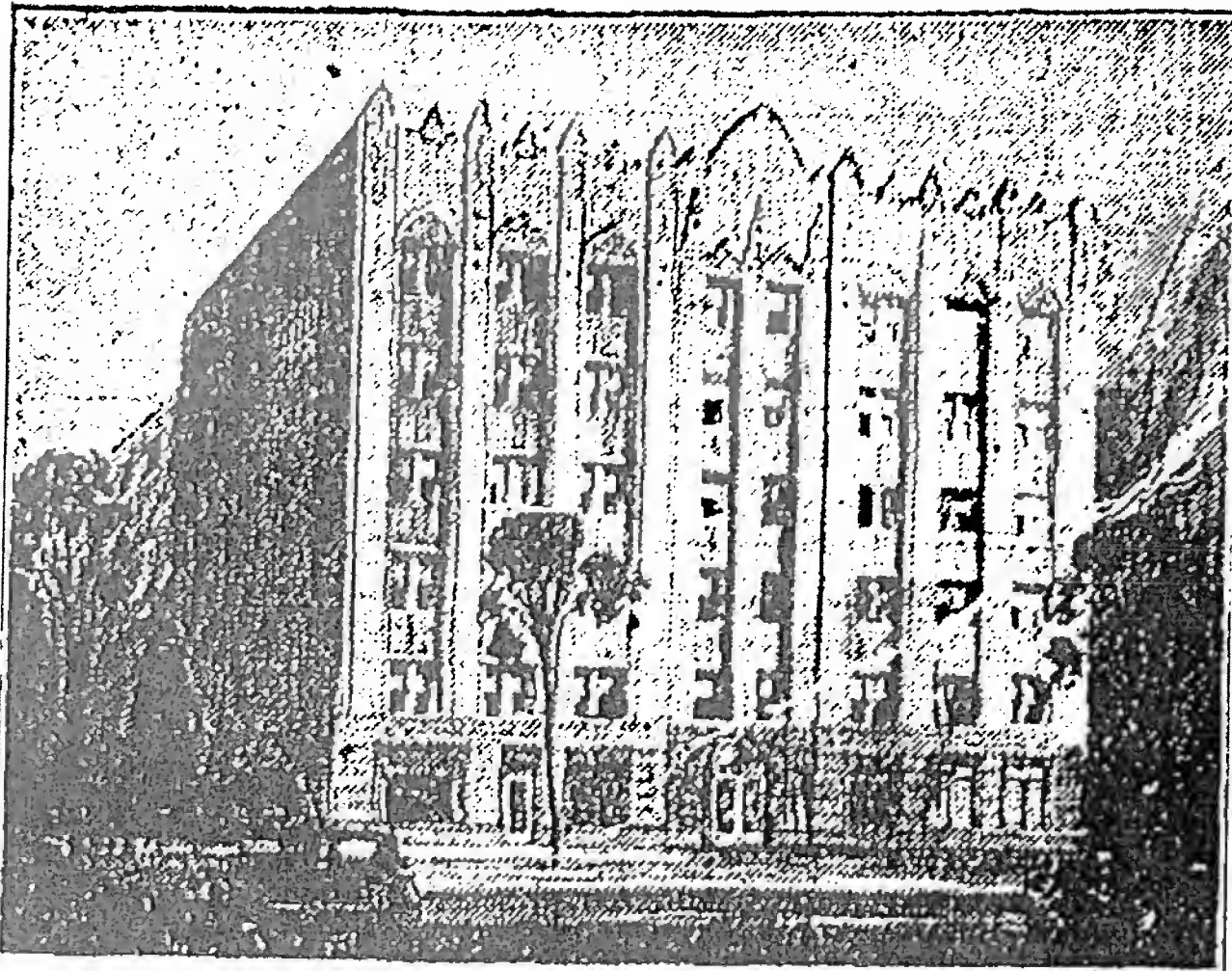


**VIGEROY HOTEL**  
2nd thru 6th Floors

**FOR YOUR SAFETY IN AN EMERGENCY**  
IF YOU DETECT FIRE OR SMOKE, CALL 911. FEEL DOOR TO SEE IF HOT. OPEN DOOR SLIGHTLY TO SEE IF YOU CAN MAKE IT TO THE STAIRWAY. IF SMOKE OR HEAT COMES FROM OTHER SIDE, OPEN AND STAY NEAR WINDOW UNTIL HELP ARRIVES. DO NOT USE ELEVATORS. USE STAIRWAYS TO LEAVE.

Union Park Hotel – Rendering (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 19, 1929)

## WEST SIDE HOSTELRY



*The Union Park hotel, on which work is under way at 1519-25 Warren boulevard, opposite Union park. Designed by B. Albert Comm, the architecture is modernistic. It is stated the investment in land, building, and furnishings will be \$500,000. Lawrence Monberg made this rendering.*

Union Park Hotel  
Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois  
County and State

Union Park Hotel – Advertisement (undated)

PHONE MONROE 1666

ARTHUR A. KLEIN, MGR.



Union Park  
Hotel

250 ROOMS

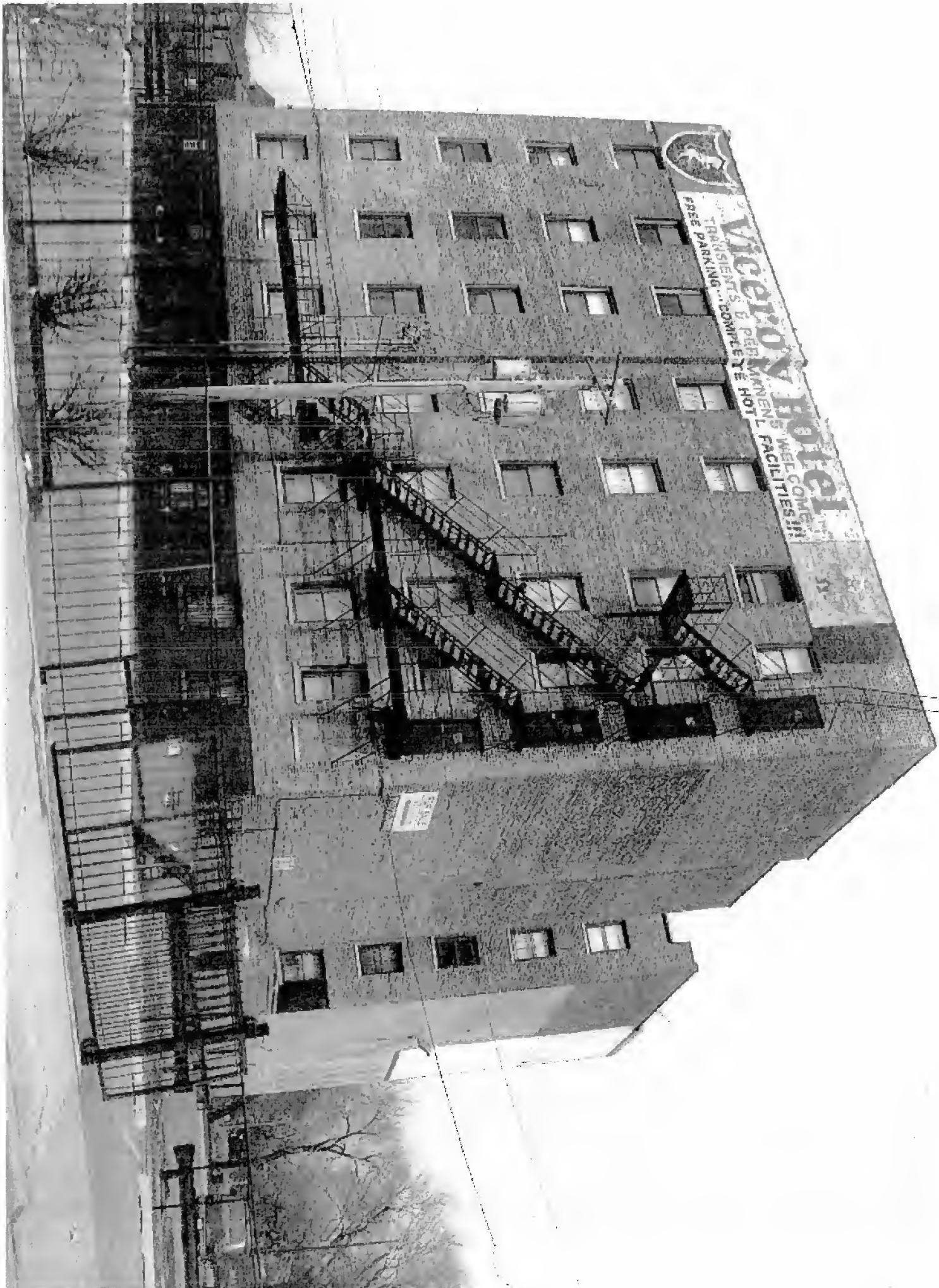
FACING UNION PARK  
FIVE MINUTES TO LOOP

Warren Blvd., at Ashland and Washington Blvds.  
Chicago

(OVER)



1234 V. Street



FREE PARKING  
TRAVELERS  
PERMANENT FACILITIES  
HOTEL

**Viceroys Hotel**

311